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## FETZER FOUNDATION ADMINISTRATION BUILDING SYMBOLISM

### INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In the spring of 1987 Kelly Snyder and Jan Andersen took a tour through the Fetzer Foundation's administration building on KL Avenue with Lloyd Swierenga. During that tour, which is transcribed here, the spiritual/esoteric symbolism of the building was discussed by Lloyd based on his understanding of it during the design and construction process.

#### SWIERENGA

...Regarding the back of the building, it's really a natural amphitheater. It's a natural antenna, if you really look at it, because it's a disk shape. The only way we're really going to know what is happening on this site is we're going to have to bring a couple of individuals out here at different times that are talented at this and have them walk around and check it out. I think if you brought two or three individuals out like that separately, got their viewpoints of what they intuitively felt was happening out here, and put those two or three views together, you more than likely would get a fairly good composite of what's really happening out here. Now to measure it physically...well, I don't ever think you're going to do it. The reason I say that is because you cannot measure spirit with physical means. We might try, but I don't think it's going to happen. Spirit is spirit and physical is physical. They're two different realms and although they're intertwined, the one doesn't compute on the other for sure.

#### ANDERSEN

Is there anything about the design of the stone housing for the electrical system that was specifically spiritual in nature, other than the commitment to use fieldstone from the land itself?"

#### SWIERENGA

No. The only reason for that is that we wanted to maintain safety and beauty. When you have transformers you're influencing the biofields of the human body. And how do you hide an ugly transformer? Now if you have an ugly transformer sitting out in the middle of everything, you're affecting the biofields of the people anyplace around it. And you know that it is very close to our parking lot. People have to walk by it all the time.

So we said, "Well how can I cover it?" Besides the copper screen inside so that the energies will be radiated down into the ground, the most natural thing here is stone. A lot of

And, of course, the roof is white also. So that symbolism is followed through.

The red granite is not so often found in the esoteric, although it is very similar to the Aswan red granite that was used in the Great Pyramid of Egypt, Cheops. In Eastern culture red stands for welcome--"Welcome to our home." The symbolism of Ra over the front door is from the Egyptian influence, the Egyptian culture.

ANDERSEN

I know there's a reason the serpentine wall is here the way it is.

SWIERENGA

The serpentine wall is here because, more than likely, one of the greatest influences on Mr. Fetzer's life has been Thomas Jefferson. And the room that represents Mr. Fetzer more than anything else in this building in totality is really the Hall of Records. That's another feature that is built into this building because there is a duality. There are many, many elements mixed together that you normally do not see mixed together in buildings. And so you have the symbolism of the very old with the very new.

Anyway, what you're really looking at with the serpentine wall is a tremendous Jeffersonian influence. It was built to deliberately put together the Jeffersonian influence with the triangular shape and combine the two. So that was very definitely built with that in mind.

ANDERSEN

It obviously provides physical support for the entry in terms of the land.

SWIERENGA

Yes. It has worked out very, very nicely.

Notice that the atrium is, if you look at it in esoteric terms, really the spiritual part because you can see through it. But also notice how all the elements of this building, including the outside walls and even the window sills, have been carried through. Now, what actually slices what? It's like a picket fence. Does a picket fence slice the wind or the wind slice the fence? If you look at the atrium as representative of the spiritual, it's fascinating that it "just happens" to be white. And with the clear glass, which is very refined, you can see through it as spirit. So, as a physical statement, the physical, mental, and emotional elements cut through the spiritual. Or the spiritual cuts through the physical, mental, and emotional. Take your pick!

afford it in this dimension at the present time. So there is a reason for choosing brass, I believe, on a spiritual basis.

Of course, you'll notice there is a lot of white used in this building. And I believe that is a representation of the spiritual, although from a color standpoint it's more of a neutral color. But there were reasons things were done in the building and part of it is purely physical. And that's all somebody would find if they stopped and looked at it. When you're talking about the blue and the burgundy, it's interesting that there are primarily three colors in the building. I believe that's representative of the physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual aspects. In other words, the entire theme has been carried throughout the building.

Now, anybody can come up and challenge me on that and say, "Well, did the architects really think of all that when they were sitting down and doing the color planning?" I'm sure they didn't. But I believe that whether creative people are consciously aware of what they're doing or not, they open themselves up to that kind of creativity and they are just naturally led. And they may not know why they are being led down that path. I suppose that the wise person is one who, after they're led down that path, sits back and says, "Hmm, now that's fascinating. I wonder what happened." Then they try to find the explanation for it.

ANDERSEN

What about the waterfall in spiritual terms? I know it's an incredible ion generator, but...

SWIERENGA

Well, the water has no chemicals in it. It's pristine. Water has always been used for cleansing. It's interesting to me that the waterfall was made out of black granite. Of course you can say, "Well, that's going to be the most dramatic," which is in fact true. But the architect could have used the red granite or gray granite. To me what it represents is the fact that water, which is a purifying agent, is being continuously run over the black granite, which represents the physical. And the physical body, the physical form, I believe must be refined and transformed into a higher energy.

ANDERSEN

So it represents the cleansing of the physical.

SWIERENGA

Yes. The cleansing of the physical; the purification of the physical; the refinement of the physical. The Indian medicine man always said, "If you don't have medicine, use

SWIERENGA

Well, the Hall of Records is really a replica of half of the dome of Monticello, which is the Jeffersonian influence. And the pillars are architectural ways of getting into and displaying the Hall of Records.

ANDERSEN

So, in essence, we wanted to reproduce that Jeffersonian ideal.

SWIERENGA

Yes, that's correct. And also the waterfall is curved rather than straight, so you have another statement of the Jeffersonian influence--a repetition of the serpentine.

ANDERSEN

Which is the same thing for the terrace.

SWIERENGA

Yes, it's been carried through. And you'll notice again in the atrium that you're moving from the physical, which is the floor, up into the spiritual. And when you're in there it just continues to go up. That will be spectacular.

ANDERSEN

You really get the sense of loftiness, of reaching up, of the cathedral in the room now that they have it painted white. It seems to be a cathedral in its own right.

I know we're building a corporate art collection. Is there a deliberate decision to put a lot of spiritual art in the collection, or is this just something that the people who picked the pieces have been personally attracted to? I'm asking if there is a deliberate theme.

SWIERENGA

Yes, there is. Or rather, there should be when we get finished. This is a very long-term project--a project I do not think will be completed in less than five to ten years. And it really hasn't been started, because we're at the point where certain art pieces have been picked which we think will carry forward the theme, but we haven't found the right person to pull it together for us yet.

When you talk about corporate art collections, people collect for different reasons. It could be, "We've got a corner on the market for all the Van Gogh's," or "I happen to like a particular artist, so I'll collect him." Or somebody may say, "Well, we'll take a lesser-known artist, bank that this person is going to become another Picasso, and we'll lock

situation full of hard rock music and very jangled modern art, your thinking, your very being takes on that kind of a jangled characteristic. If, on the other hand, you surround yourself with things of beauty, of peace and quiet, of spirituality, you will tend to become that way. You can't help but become that way. And the strange thing is that if you don't believe that way, you're never going to become attracted to the organization in that respect, because like attracts like. So that's why it's very important to have the building up and running and have these things in place--so that the people we attract will be of that kind of nature.

SNYDER

So it becomes a non-verbal affirmation.

SWIERENGA

Totally, yes. Because even if visitors don't recognize it at a conscious level, that isn't important. They will recognize it at some level. And it doesn't matter if they just walk by--it goes into the subconscious because you can't stop it.

ANDERSEN

Yes, because the brain picks up everything and remembers it.

SWIERENGA

Yes. It may not do it at a conscious level, but it will remember.

Now as far as the hologram goes, I can only tell you what we're trying to do. Whether we can do it or not, I don't know. We are hoping this is a hologram that will project out the seven energy centers of the human, the chakras. It will actually put this out in color. We're trying to use the color of the sun, which is a pure energy, and it will put the light or colors out into the air, into the atmosphere. And if it does what we think it will do, individuals will be able to physically walk into that color. Now there is, in my mind anyway, ample evidence to indicate that color has a dramatic influence on the energy fields of the human body. And so that hologram is giving individuals an opportunity to change.

SNYDER

The receptionist will be feeling good!

SWIERENGA

That's really true!

ANDERSEN

What about the meditation room? Obviously if we're going to talk about the spiritual center of the building in terms of

Yes. That is built very interestingly. I'm very hopeful that when individuals go into the room they will leave their shoes on the shelves we'll have in there, and go into the actual meditation room in only their stocking feet. The idea behind that is a conscious process where we recognize we are in a space that is different. Symbolically, by taking off our shoes we're leaving the physical behind us as we present ourselves to the spiritual world.

ANDERSEN

Like it was with Moses taking off his shoes and standing on holy ground.

SWIERENGA

That's correct. When you mentioned about getting into the room--well, you're talking about "the straight and narrow gate." It's something of a maze on the physical level as to how to get through there. And that is very simple and subtle symbolism built right in the walls.

ANDERSEN

You have to pay attention to where you're going, otherwise you'll walk into a wall!

SWIERENGA

That's right.

ANDERSEN

Is there anything else that we should know for communicating the imagery or the spiritual symbolism of this building?

SWIERENGA

Over time there will be dramatic changes. We need to be aware of that and accept it.

I'd simply say, too, that all of the conference tables are round. They were chosen for that very reason. I can't think of any other spiritual symbolism that is really built in.... But where does spirituality stop and the physical begin?

To represent the Foundation's international nature or its scope, in the dining room the tables will be made out of woods that have come from every continent in the world.

ANDERSEN

Oh, each table has that?

SWIERENGA

No, each table is a different wood. So on one table you have something that comes from South America; on another table you have something that comes from Africa; and on another you

have something that comes from Australia. So all the world's continents are represented in the dining room.

ANDERSEN

ANDERSEN: Are they also round?

Are they also found in the same habitats?

## REFERENCES

**SWIERENGA** *On braided seafloor sand waves in the Bay of Fundy and*

No, those are square.

Well, I think that's it:

ANDERSEN & SNYDER

OK! Thanks.

public use, the lobby is the spiritual center, but the meditation room has been designed for the employees. What are your thoughts about that?

SWIERENGA

Well, I think that room is in a definite vortex of energy. It's fascinating that the meditation room landed on that particular corner of the building. The reason I say that is because I don't think the architect sat down and said, "Well, I think there are some energy points on the land there so that is where I'll put the meditation room."

What we have done is to make the room very, very plain with white. There will be white wool carpet on the floor. We also have cushions that are lavender and, of course, lavender is a very esoteric color symbolizing the higher chakra. So that symbolism has been built in.

The other thing is that the room itself is very plain. On one wall will be a painting which represents higher energy sources flowing down through a being into all of the world's major religious traditions. It's by Arthur Douet and when it comes in you'll have to look at it to see what it really represents.

ANDERSEN

I understand it's really big, something like 65" x 65".

SWIERENGA

Yes, its huge.

Sometime after we get into the building we'd like to put stained glass in the lower windows. The reason for that is to essentially block the physical and let only spiritual energy come into that particular room. Now you don't put cement blocks there to do that--that would be going too far. By using translucent glass you can show that we are living in the physical and that we can't totally deny that or block it. We maintain our consciousness on the spiritual, but are aware of the physical also. So it's not a matter of totally blocking the physical. The stained glass symbolizes the conscious realization that, "Yes, I know the physical is there, but I choose not to concentrate my attention on that particular area right now."

ANDERSEN

Wasn't there a specific reason that the entry to the meditation room is a maze of a sort? Wasn't there something about the consciousness of going in there?

SWIERENGA

their work in the vault. Then in a hundred years somebody's going to become a multimillionaire because we have a corner on the entire market."

ANDERSEN

So they are an investment, too?

SWIERENGA

So they are partly an investment. But what we're really looking for is when a person looks at a piece of art, they have the ability to say, "Hmm, that is beautiful." It does something to their spirit. And if an individual really knows that the symbolism within a picture or sculpture also reflects the symbolism in this building, then it can be really and truly spiritually uplifting.

I have a feeling that if the Foundation ever leaves its challenge of following a spiritual path first, it will be totally unsuccessful and more than likely will fall. I believe that very, very strongly. If it becomes so wrapped up in the physical that it forgets its spiritual heritage, it will fall. It will not succeed.

ANDERSEN

So the corporate art collection becomes a reminder of that to the employees.

SWIERENGA

It becomes a reminder at a subconscious level.

ANDERSEN

So the implication of that is the pieces will always grow and change because the consciousness of the employees and guests of the Foundation is always growing and changing. And that is a criteria for when we buy art--that it has to be abstract enough that people can throw their own energies into it.

SWIERENGA

Some of it yes, and some of it no. I have one piece of artwork where the symbolism is right there. You can see it; it's blatant. The picture is a forest with a deer. It's like some of the artwork at the Illuminarium.

ANDERSEN

That's what I'm thinking about. That it attracts you if you're ready to be attracted.

SWIERENGA

That's correct. Now, I won't speak for you, but I know that what I associate myself with is what I tend to become. Because like attracts like. So if you put yourself in a

pure water." And the reason for that is because pure water which has been transformed by the interaction of the elements--the air, the sun, even the bending of the stream over the rocks--has an effect. It aligns the molecules and the cells' energies in a particular way. Since pure water in itself is highly reactive, any impurities that are in the physical body will essentially be carried out with the water. And since we are mostly comprised of water in our physical bodies, it is a point of purification. I think that's the same symbolism that's been built into the building itself.

ANDERSEN

What about the carvings at the employee entrance?

SWIERENGA

That is the angel of protection on the back. And that is a reminder of daily protection as we come to work.

ANDERSEN

Why was this symbol picked? Is this something we need to investigate?

SWIERENGA

I think that's something you need to investigate. Certainly the symbolism of why that was picked, from my standpoint, I think it has to do with a special kind of energy. I think both the drawing on the front and the symbolism on the back door were picked specifically by Mr. Fetzer.

ANDERSEN

So, we really need to ask him.

SWIERENGA

You really need to. But there is some deeper symbolism built into it that needs to be researched.

ANDERSEN

What about the window over the Hall of Records?

SWIERENGA

Well, that is carrying forward the rising sun. And, of course, you have the rising sun over the front entrance also. But this piece of stained glass is a duplicate in its own way of the solar disk you see in the front. This is really a more modern representation of a similar concept, and it provides a striking entrance to the Hall of Records with all the individuals that are portrayed in that area.

ANDERSEN

What of the pillar motif at the entrance to the Hall of Records?

When you look at the building conceptually upstairs, it is very similar in some respects to great cathedrals. You'll see this in the hallways with the Gothic ceiling treatment, and that feeling is also conveyed by the wood coming down the side of the walls. So when you look down those hallways, it's like you're in some of the great European cathedrals.

There is something interesting about the outside offices, too. They're not cubicle in shape like in a lot of old structures; they are almost parallelograms. But they are like individual monastic cells. And the windows in those offices are very special. The long window which runs the whole length of the room is really representative of the physical. And when you look out of the upper window when you are in that room, unless you stand on a chair, you can only look up. That is meant to be a continuous reminder to each of us of where our real power comes from, of where our source is, of who we are and what we are. I believe personally that while an individual may not recognize what is going on, the very forms we put ourselves into will, in fact, influence us at a subconscious level.

ANDERSEN

So when we walk into that office, we have a reminder that we work in the physical and are manifesting in the physical, but that the energy comes from somewhere else.

SWIERENGA

From a higher source, another dimension. That's correct. Because what we do as people, including yours truly, is that we frequently get caught in the total illusion of the physical. And we get so wrapped up in it that we forget who we are and what we're here to do.

ANDERSEN

Lloyd, what about the colors? I know that the materials of the building are basically all natural and we've gone to, for the most part, earth or sky related colors. There's no shocking pink in this building! But other than the esthetics of affecting the human body with pleasing colors and materials, is there a spiritual significance why we chose blue, burgundy, and brass and those kinds of colors?

SWIERENGA

The brass was very definitely chosen because we couldn't afford gold, as funny as that may sound. The reason why gold would be chosen is because of its very highly refined nature. And, of course, gold has been and is a source of energy--and I'm speaking purely in esoteric terms in that respect. Well, brass is the closest that you can come to gold and still

it--not all of it, but I'd say a majority of it--came from our property here. So again, what we tried to do--instead of leveling the land, flattening it off, trucking the dirt away, and then carting stuff back in--we have used the stuff that was here originally. It sat here for thousands of years more than likely. So we've used that and we've tried not to disturb the energy that's here. We have tried to work with nature.

If you want to talk about the spirituality of it... well, the Staff Committee came out here before there was one shovel of dirt that was turned, and we asked for the cooperation of all the energies that were on this property. And I think that has really showed up in our commitment to the energies of this property. We said, "We want your cooperation and when we leave and this building is here, what we hope will happen is that we will be able to increase your abilities, whatever they are, to work better to fulfill the Master Plan for the highest good of all."

Now if you come to the front, you'll notice the walkway that we're walking on in the front parking lot is an aggregate that is really rough. And what humans seem to do is that we take something that in nature appears to be disorganized and I think we tend to organize it. The composite that we're walking on is really organized large stones. Then as you get up closer to the building, more toward the front, you'll notice the composite becomes finer. So it gets progressively finer and finer, and smaller and smaller. Then when you go into the front of the building and onto the floor in the lobby area, it's not only exceedingly fine but also highly polished. So it goes from the less organized to the more organized, from the rough to the smooth.

ANDERSEN

From the more gross to the higher spiritual.

SWIERENGA

Right. From the more gross to the higher spiritual region. In the building itself we have used many, many forms which you normally don't see. You'll notice that there are squares in the block itself. You have rectangular shapes in some of the blocks. You have the circle and the triangle. So there are a number of forms involved in this.

In looking at the building itself, the black granite really represents the physical. As you go up the building on the outside you'll notice that you are moving into the mental and emotional with the gray granite, and ultimately to the spiritual. The one part that you don't see, and it can be hard to visualize, is that the top of the atrium is white.